

**Introduction to Latin American Politics**  
**POLS 3322**  
Tuesday and Thursday  
4:00-5:30 p.m.  
Charles F. McElhinney Hall 118

University of Houston  
Spring 2014  
Francisco Cantú  
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This course compares political regimes, institutions, social issues and policies across Latin American countries. In particular, we will use the analytical tools from comparative politics and political economy to (1) understand the political and economic development of the region over time and (2) the variation of the policy-making procedures and the political outcomes within Latin America. The goal of the course is not to make you an expert on the political history of the region, but to use the cases reviewed in the course for a better understanding of the main concepts in political science that will help you analyze other regions in the world. The course assumes no familiarity with Latin American politics, yet some basic knowledge on comparative politics is recommended (POLS 3311 is encouraged).

### **Format**

We will meet twice a week for the duration of the semester. After making a brief introduction to the topic, we will discuss in detail the assigned readings as well as talk about the current political events in the region. Students are expected to come to each class having read all the required material. Topics presented in class are complemented with assigned readings from this syllabus, so the lectures should not be taken as a substitute for the readings.

### **Readings and material for the class**

There is an average of 55 pages of readings per week. If possible, read the material in the order indicated. We will spend the first Thursday of the semester to clarify the goals and techniques required to read the assigned material. At the beginning of every lecture, I will expect that you understand the basic argument of the readings as well that you expressed your questions and comments on the readings.

The course requires the following textbook:

Smith, P. H. (2012). *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press.

We will use this book for several lectures, and it may be useful as a future reference for other courses. The rest of the readings are available online on NB (<http://nb.mit.edu>), which is a collaborative text annotation tool that will help me and your peer-students to solve your specific questions on the readings before class. Additional information and instructions on how to sign up to the system will be provided during the first lecture. Please let me know if you have any economic restriction that may prevent you from obtaining the course material.

### **Course Requirements**

**Exams:** There will be three take-home exams. These tests allow you to use the textbook, articles, and notes of the course. You will have 48 hours to complete each exam, which will consist of a five typewritten pages essay. For your exam to be graded, you need to submit both a hard copy of your essay at the beginning of the lecture when the exam is due and an electronic

copy via Blackboard. The exams will be graded on your skill in developing a well-written argument and in using the materials covered in the course to support your opinion.

**In-class quizzes:** To encourage you to read in advance the lecture, there will be several in-class quizzes, which date will not be announced in advance. Each quiz consists of a short question about the main argument and concepts of the readings assigned to you that day. When estimating your final grade, I will drop out your lowest quiz.

**Presentation:** Once during the semester, you need to make a 10-minute presentation of the contemporary political issues in a particular Latin American country. Presentations will take place every Thursday and the schedule will be discussed during the first class.

**Grading:**

Partial Exam I	20%
Partial Exam II	20%
Partial Exam III	20%
In-class quizzes	20%
Presentation	10%
Participation	10%
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Total	100%

Final letter grades will be calculated in an absolute scale as follows: A (94-100%), A- (90-93%), B+ (87-89%), B (84-86%), B- (80-83%), C+ (77-79%), C (74-76%), C- (70-73%), D+ (67-69%), D (64-66%), D- (60-63%), F (0-59%).

**Disabilities**

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both me and the Center for Students with DisAbilities (CSD).<sup>1</sup> You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriate accommodations.

**Academic Integrity**

There will be a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism in any of the required activities for this course, and any violation will be penalized in the terms cited by the UH's Academic Dishonesty Policy.<sup>2</sup>

**Deadlines and extensions:** Unless very pressing (and fully documented) situations, extensions for quizzes or presentations are not allowed. Late exam submissions will be marked down 10% for each 24 hour period in which they are late (one hour late = -10%, 25 hours late = -20% letters, and so on). Exception to this policy will be considered if 1) you contact me in writing a week in advance to discuss a conflict, or 2) you provide documentation of a severe illness or family emergency that prevented you from completing the assignment on time.

**Office Hours:**

Wednesday 2:00-4:00 p.m. at 429 Philip Guthrie Hoffman Hall.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.uh.edu/csd/>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.uh.edu/academics/catalog/policies/academ-reg/academic-honesty/>

**Teaching Assistant:**

Emilia Barreto (egbarretodecarvalho@central.uh.edu). Office hours: Tuesday 12:30-2:00 p.m. at 426 Philip Guthrie Hoffman Hall.

**Course Outline****January 14. Introduction and Logistics of the Course****January 16. Workshop: How to Read an Academic Article****January 21. Comparative Politics and Latin America.**

Geddes, B. (2012). The Integration of Rational Choice into the Study of Politics in Latin America. In Kingstone, P and Yashar, D. J., editors, *Routledge Handbook of Latin American Politics*. Routledge, New York: p. 419-33.

**January 23. Legacies of Underdevelopment**

Acemoglu, D. and Robinson, J. A. (2012). *Why Nations Fall?* Crown Business, New York: Ch. 1, p. 7-44.

**January 28. Strategies of Development**

Cardoso, E. and Helwege, A. (2000). Import Substitution Industrialization. In Frieden, J., Jr., M. P., and Tomz, M., editors, *Modern political economy and Latin America*, pages 155–164. Westview Press

Dornbusch, R. and Edwards, S. (1991). The Macroeconomics of Populism. In Dornbusch, R. and Edwards, S., editors, *The Macroeconomics of Populism in Latin America*, pages 7–13. The University of Chicago Press

**January 30. Market-oriented reforms**

Weyland, K. (1998). Swallowing the Bitter Pill: Sources of Popular Support for Neoliberal Reform in Latin America. *Comparative Political Studies*, 31(5):539–568

**February 4. Political Regimes**

Smith, P. H. (2012). *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press: Introduction and Chapter 1.

**February 6. The Military Rule**

Smith, P. H. (2012). *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press: Chapter 3, p. 75-105.

### **February 11. Democratic Breakdowns**

Cohen, Y. (1994). *Radicals, Reformers, and Reactionaries*. The University of Chicago Press: Chapters 6 and 7.

### **February 13. First Partial Exam**

### **February 18. Democratic Transitions (I)**

Smith, P. H. (2012). *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press: Chapter 2, p. 43-71.

### **February 20. Democratic Transitions (II)**

Wood, E. J. (2001). An Insurgent Path to Democracy: Popular Mobilization, Economic Interests, and Regime Transition in South Africa and El Salvador. *Comparative Political Studies*, 34(8):862–888

### **February 25. Institutions: Introduction**

Smith, P. H. (2012). *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press: Chapter 5, p. 135-156.

Negretto, G. L. (2013). *Making Constitutions: Presidents, Parties, and Institutional Choice in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press: Chapter 1, p. 13-42.

### **February 27. Presidential Powers**

Smith, P. H. (2012). *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press: p. 137-162.

Alemán, E. and Tsebelis, G. (2005). The Origins of Presidential Conditional Agenda-Setting Power in Latin America. *Latin American Research Review*, 40(2):3–26:

### **March 4. Legislatures**

Smith, P. H. (2012). *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press: p. 163-179.

Saiegh, S. (2010). Active Players or Rubber Stamps? An Evaluation of the Policymaking Role of Latin American Legislatures. In Scartascini, C. G., Stein, E., and Tommasi, M., editors, *How Democracy Works*. Inter-American Development Bank: p. 47-76.

### **March 6. Electoral Systems**

Negretto, G. L. (2006). Choosing How to Choose Presidents: Parties, Military Rulers, and Presidential Elections in Latin America. *Journal of Politics*, 68(2):421–433

### **March 18. Party Systems**

Jones, M. P. (2010). Beyond the Electoral Connection: The Effect of Political Parties on the Policymaking Process. In Scartascini, C. G., Stein, E., and Tommasi, M., editors, *How Democracy Works: Political Institutions, Actors, and Arenas in Latin American Policymaking*. Inter-American Development Bank: p. 19-46.

Samuels, D. J. and Shugart, M. S. (2010). *Presidents, Parties, and Parliaments*. Cambridge University Press: Ch. 7, p. 193-217.

### **March 25. Second Partial Exam**

#### **March 27. Elections I**

Smith, P. H. (2012). *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press: Ch. 7, p. 180-208.

Benton, A. (2005). Dissatisfied Democrats or Retrospective Voters?: Economic Hardship, Political Institutions, and Voting Behavior in Latin America. *Comparative Political Studies*, 38(4):417–442:

#### **March 27. Elections II**

Carreras, M. (2012). The Rise of Outsiders in Latin America, 1980-2010: An Institutional Perspective. *Comparative Political Studies*, XX(X):1–32

Ardanaz, M. and Scartascini, C. (2013). Inequality and Personal Income Taxation: The Origins and Effects of Legislative Malapportionment. *Comparative Political Studies*, 46(12):1638–1663

### **April 1. Ethnic Politics**

Smith, P. H. (2012). *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press: Ch. 9, p. 235-262.

Van Cott, D. L. (2005). Building Inclusive Democracies: Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Minorities in Latin America. *Democratization*, 12(5):820–837

### **April 3. No Class**

#### **April 8. Guatemalan Ambassador (to be confirmed). Public Opinion**

Bischoping, K. and Schuman, H. (1992). Pens and Polls in Nicaragua: An Analysis of the 1990 Preelection Surveys. *American Journal of Political Science*, 36(2):331–350

#### **April 10. Environmental Politics. Guest Lecturer: Kristin Wintersteen**

Carey, M., French, A., and O'Brien, E. (2012). Unintended effects of technology on climate change adaptation: an historical analysis of water conflicts below andean glaciers. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 38:181–191

### **April 15. Representation**

Smith, P. H. (2012). *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press: Ch. 10, p. 289-309.

Machado, F., Scartascini, C. G., and Tommasi, M. (2011). Political Institutions and Streets Protests in Latin America. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 55(3):340–365

### **April 17. Violence**

Snyder, R. and Martínez, A. D. (2009). Drugs, Violence, and State-Sponsored Protection Rackets in Mexico and Colombia. *Colombia Internacional*, (70):61–91:

### **April 22. Policies and Politics**

Smith, P. H. (2012). *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press: Ch. 8, p. 211-234.

### **April 24. Issues in Democratic Consolidation**

Smith, P. H. (2012). *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press: Ch. 11, p. 263-299.

Levitsky, S. and Loxton, J. (2013). Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in the Andes. *Democratization*, 20(1):107–136:

### **April 29. Third Partial Exam is due**